

## WASHINGTON

DR. WILSON VISITS THE NATIONAL CAPITOL AND WRITES HIS IMPRESSIONS.

**Declares That Washington Has Not Been Over-Estimated, But Over-Glorified—That His Monument Is Significantly Imperialistic, Too much One Man—A Letter Full of New and Striking Ideas, and Racy With Descriptive Humor, History and Personal Mention.**

Washington, D. C., Sept. 25, 1903.  
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After looking through the Capitol and other great buildings of this city, and visiting Mr. Vernon, I thought of what Southey had said: "Surely Washington hath left his awful memory—a light for after times." Surely, said I, if any man hath made immortality for himself, that man was Washington. Here a great Capitol bears his name, and a shaft, piercing the clouds, rises to his memory.

What king, in the history of the world, has been so honored? Yet, I remember that a mightier monument was built to Ramesis, who lives to-day, but in his epitaph, while his mummy is exhibited to curious crowds in a foreign museum. Such is the fate of reputations and of nations. After all, only thought lives. Monuments crumble; the great actors of history grow dim as they recede from the age in which they played their parts, and, finally, like Ramesis, are left of them but their epitaphs.

Mighty changes take place in a century. I prophesy that within two hundred years the Capitol of this country will occupy a central location, and the public buildings at Washington be utilized as a military barracks. The over-grown country will either split from its weight, or sectional feeling will demand the removal of this Capitol to a more central point. Thus the fame of Washington will grow dim with the ages, with the changes of government and with the change of the face of nature. The public buildings which to-day look so beautiful and enduring, will then become antiquated and inefficient. All things yield to "Time," the tomb-builder, and only thought lives.

Washington was an actor, not a thinker, not a creator of government. He played his part, and played it well; but he and all of his generals must bear the same relation to

Thomas Paine. The thinker and creator of Democracy, that Edmund Keene and Macready, Forrest, Booth and Irving bear to Shakespeare; or that his forgotten interpreters bear to Aeschylus. The thought which creates hath even a greater immortality than the deed which executes. I do not, in any sense, aim to depreciate the fame of Washington by the comparison, but more nicely to adjust the uneven distribution of praise, and hasten, if possible, the inevitable justice that will be given to the creative genius of American independence—Thomas Paine—as inevitable as is the immortality of Homer over his heroes, or Aristotle over Alexander.

**Washington City** is the worst laid out of any city in America. Give a boy a slate, on his first day at school, and tell him to draw a city, and he could plan one almost as good.

I was told that the original plan was much opposed, but that Washington himself approved it, and that set it; also, that he, with a lot of other real estate dealers, grabbed up all the property thereabouts, and that public improvements and running of streets became a matter of political pull, each wire-pulling to have the improvements extend in the direction of his property—Washington having as big a business nose as any of them. Consequently the streets run and twist in every direction, and even the residents there can't put the English together in such a way as to direct you to where to find places.

Instead of planning a grand plaza three to five hundred feet wide, the Capitol at one end and the White House at the other, with all the public buildings lining the sides—a vacant space between each building of at least a square, to insure safety from fire, and sites for fountains, statues, grass and trees. Everything is confusion and irregularity; the public buildings located here and there in out of the way places, amid bad surroundings, thus making no general combined display whatever. All these great buildings could have been arranged into a magnificent Court of Honor—a burst of magnificent splendor, to the eye, and the city made to appear indeed something like a capitol instead of a straggling country town. A plan has been proposed to re-model the city, something after what I here indicate, but as most of the government buildings needed are already erected and can't be moved, it will be no great improvement after all.

**Streets and People.**

Pennsylvania avenue is the principal street, zig-zagging off from the Capitol. The street itself is wide, but the buildings common, with many old tumble-downs, most of which are occupied by Chinese laundries and "dope" houses. The Chinese signs are thick, all the way from the Capitol down into the city. I counted in the directory 180 Chinese laundries, and it looks to me that at least a third of them are on Pennsylvania avenue. The people you see on the city in appearance—Chinese—mean looking negroes and common and cheap looking whites. I saw fine looking whites, of course, but they are few in proportion. I speak of the general aspect of the streets as compared with that of other cities, and I must say that the average Washingtonian is a shoddy looking specimen—a combination of shabby, genteel, political rundown, has-been, chair-warmer, looker for something to turn, and know it all. In fact, Eastern people are not up

with Western people in many particulars. They haven't the push, git-up-and-git, quickness of step, dress, style, health and good looks. Nearly every one, men and women alike, in New York wear store clothes. There is a common look about the people. The women have bad complexions and age prematurely. I can stand at a corner in Cincinnati and see more pretty, well dressed, stylish women in thirty minutes than I saw in New York in two weeks; or, for that matter, I can see more at the door of a shoe factory. I was told that it was the climate and salt air which ruined the complexions of the women. At the bathing resorts the young girls and women have a harum-scarum Tom-boy stamp on their countenances as plain as if labeled on them; there is another class of lazy-slouch, another decidedly demimonde, another coldly aristocratic, but all as brazen as a Catholic priest discussing total abstinence.

**Smithsonian Institute.** This was the first place I visited, and here I called upon and met Dr. Frank Burns, geologist, and well known to Blade readers. He was hospitable itself, glad to see me, just dropped work and accompanied me about for two days.

The Smithsonian Institute was founded by James Smithson, an Englishman and an infidel. It aims to gather together everything that has ever lived in this world—from the minutest to the largest form of animal life. It is one of the most famous and well known institutions in the world, but there are some people who keep asking, What has infidelity done for humanity?

The Smithsonian Institute has helped to do this much—break down the ignorant Christian ideas of creation, by scientific research into nature and all her forms and laws. This institution is an immense education for its exhibits are to be seen at all our great exhibitions, thus affording millions an opportunity to study them. Thus infidel James Smithson built better than he knew. This exhibition must be seen to be appreciated. It would require several pages in this paper to describe it. I will only mention that I saw the oldest human art work in the possession of man, that of carving on the bones of the Mastodon, showing that man was contemporary with that animal and lived away back in the paleolithic age—centuries before a Jew ever lived to trumpet up the Garden of Eden story.

In showing you bones, shells and other formations here, they do not talk of 6,000 years ago, but of the Pliocene drift, 200,000 years ago, in which drift they find certain shells and the bones and teeth of man. I saw a shell three feet high and weighing 302 pounds.

**A Business Bird.**

The domestic habits of the Horn-bill, a native bird of Siam and Burmah, and somewhat resembling a duck, is worthy of mention. They build their nests in the hollow of a tree, and when the times comes for setting, the male walls the hole up with mud, leaving a space just large enough for the female to protrude her head and neck. There she sits until the chicks hatch, the male bringing her food and water, talking love, admonishing her to be patient, relating outside matters of gossip, and telling her all she ought to know under the circumstances.

Just why he walls her up is not known—whether it be because she is inclined to gad about and desert the nest, and allow the eggs to chill, or whether he wishes to escape his share of the setting, or go out for a time by himself. Anyway, he fixes her so she has to attend strictly to business. Generally, I take the part of the female, but in this case, I believe the male is right. He knows his hen and her gadding disposition, or he wouldn't go to all that trouble to wall up a big hole, and hustle for food, and carry her the news, etc., all of which is harder work than setting time about. I feel sorry for her, that she can't get out to stretch her legs now and then, but business is business.

There are a lot of women who gad around hugging and kissing peedies, dogs, who ought to have husbands of Horn-bill proclivities.

**Public Buildings.**

The Capitol, of course, is the chief object of attraction to every visitor. Considering the period at which it was built, it is all that one ought to expect. It is beginning to look a little antiquated, and would look more so if it were not painted every year. White marble will not stand that climate, and granite has taken its place in the construction of public buildings. The Army and Navy building is the ideal public structure of the city. The White House is not a palace, but pretty good enough. There is a disposition to build a new Presidential residence on the plea of not having enough room; but more, I think because there is a feeling existing among aristocrats that the President should have a palace equal to or surpassing that of any millionaire or king. Only the sentiment attached to the White House saves it from destruction. In my opinion, the President should live plainly, in a plain house, without the presence of plain funkyness, as is fitting in a republic, and as a lesson to kings. But it is only a question of time and the White House will be a Presidential museum.

**The Congressional Library.**

But of all the buildings, this one excels in beauty and architecture. It is simply a dream of marbled magnificence—of columns, arch, balustrade, mosaic, sculpture, fresco and painting. It is recognized as the finest library building in the world, and contains 1,200,000 volumes. I had a letter of introduction from Mr. Elliott to Mr. Theodore Koch, superintendent of the catalogue department, who very obligingly gave me much information. It happened that just as I called, Mr. Koch was assorting Paine literature. Conway had presented his manuscript to the Library with all the letters, pamphlets, etc., which furnished the material for his book. Every picture, scrap and information whatsoever concerning Paine has been gathered

together here, as well as all the different lives of Paine. This library does not alone collect books, but every pamphlet or writing whatsoever having a historical or biographical bearing upon an author, that the historian may have access to every particular, for and against. It is open to all opinion, and no author is barred. The vestibule and rotunda is finished in pure white marble and gold, with rich mosaics and paintings. The ceilings are also mosaic, and upon first sight I think they are painted, but the very rich coloring is the color of the little stones which enter into the mosaic. Numerous mottoes and names of authors appear here and there. The names given the place of honor in the rotunda are: Shakespeare, Goethe, Moliere, Moses, Herodotus, Dante, Homer, Bacon, Aristotle, Longfellow, Tennyson, Gibbon, Bancroft, Cervantes, Hugo, Scott and Cooper.

Not one of these was a theologian, and nearly all of them Pagan, infidel and Unitarian. In fact, Christianity is thrown completely in the shade here. Out of the hundreds of names appearing on the walls and ceilings there is not one of a Pope or Saint, and but two or three theologians. The great Pagan and infidel writers of the world most abound. In stepping from the rotunda to the reading room, you pass from one dazzling dream into another even more startling. This room is octagonal in shape, 100 feet wide, and 150 feet high, all finished in colored Italian and African marble, cream, chocolate and gold. It requires 3,600 lights to illuminate this room alone. I visited the library once by day and twice by night, wandering from room to room, unable to decide which was most beautiful.

This library is the glory of the United States—here where are gathered ponderous tomes—bales of the mind's rich merchandise. Here Capitol, monument and temple and spire shrink to littleness. Here thought reigns—the thought of all the ages—the thought gathered from the ruins of an antique world with the glories of a modern one. Such a library is essential; for most history, heretofore, has been built upon falsehood and exaggeration. Now we gather and file every minute information for reference. Historians and theologians from this on must tell the truth.

To illustrate, I have just read in a book review that a pile of manuscript and letters of Robert Morris were lately found in a French paper mill. These, giving much insight to the financial affairs of the war of the revolution, have been deposited in the Congressional Library, and from them a new life of Morris has just been written and published by the Macmillan Company.

I find, since writing my letter on Girard College, that I am in error in my statement that Girard assumed the obligation of \$5,000,000 during the Revolutionary war. This occurred in the war of 1812. Morris and Paine were the financiers of the Revolution.

**The National Museum.** is, perhaps the institution of more general interest than any other in Washington. I had heard of a lecture in a lecture hall, and went to see the skeletons all in a row, from the smallest and lowest form of monkey on through all the higher forms up to man. Also those of the cat family from the smallest feline up to the Bengal tiger. The preacher said it was criminal thus for the United States publicly to sanction the infidel theory of Evolution; and, besides, it couldn't be proven that man evolved from the monkey, and it was more likely that the monkey degenerated from the man.

I looked for these skeletons, but found that the arrangement had been changed. No doubt some preacher or preachers had gotten their work in. But there were exhibited in a row, the skeletons of the common ape, Gorilla, Chimpanzee, South Sea Islander, Negro, Indian and Caucasian—the lower and smaller forms being removed to a separate case.

Here is a building covering four acres, filled with the curious, Franklin's printing press, attracting me as much perhaps as any other thing. Outside, on the lawn in front of the Museum is a magnificent sarcophagus—that was brought here from Syria. It is cut out of solid granite, richly carved, and evidently intended for some royal personage. It is said that the body of Alexander the Great lay in this tomb for some time, until a tomb was built for him. When it was brought to this country, it was said to President Jackson. But "Old Hickory" wouldn't have it, saying that he "was a Democrat, and didn't want to be buried in an Emperor's tomb."

**The War and Medical Museum.**

is located near the National Museum, and to me was specially interesting. Here I saw Evolution illustrated by figures of the human foetus in state of development from the spermatozoa on through all the periods of gestation. I began to explain it to a lady who asked me a question about it, and soon had a dozen around me, some of them young ladies. I told them I would tell them all about it, if they could stand it, and there was only one way to tell it, and that was the plain way, and I fully explained the law of conception and foetal development up through the animal. They stood it and wanted more. I led them to a case in which I had seen five or six full born human infants, all with tails, the longest being eight inches, and I gave them a lecture on "Tail," explaining that those monkeys which sit on their tails, in time wear them off, and eventually they breed short tail offspring; and as their tails get out of the way, they learn to sit erect, and then walk erect, then grow larger and more intelligent—their bones and muscles changing form as they approach the likeness of the human.

I led them to a case where, exhibited in alcohol, the human vermiform appendix, both in normal and diseased conditions, and explained this obsolete and rudimentary bowel, the relic of our quadruped condition. I was astonished at the desire the women expressed to know more about

Evolution. It was all wonderful to them. It told them why they had been priest-bound, kept in ignorance, and to read Darwin and Spencer and learn for themselves. I told them that all reform depended upon the emancipation of the mind of woman, and it was their duty to cease being believers, and to be thinkers and investigators. They proved to me by their eagerness to know that all woman-kind now needs is the chance to learn and know, and they thanked me heartily when we separated.

**Washington Statuary.** Washington is full of statues, a few good, but most bad. Many of them have been erected a good many years, and, of course, the sculptors of forty and fifty years ago were not up to the merit of those of to-day. Here are a great many equestrian statues, in which the horse is a picture horse—rearing and pawing the air, as no one ever saw a horse rear and paw. These, to me, always look like chromos and the general on horse-back, a soaring fool. The old time artists thought they must make the horse rear and jump and look like a horse never looked, in order to prove the general a good horseman. All these kind of statues ought to be dumped into the ocean. Washington statuary is generally cheap and skimpy—looking as things generally are which are ordered by politicians. Some of these statues would be better fitted to stand in a field to keep the crows out of the corn.

**Dewey a Dead One.**

I asked a dozen people, what had become of Dewey, and if the papers ever mentioned him, and the replies were all alike—"Dewey is a dead one." Dewey got the swelled head and couldn't stand applause—didn't understand human nature enough to know that a deep, dull silence always followed an excess of noise, and that the howling of to-day may turn to hisses to-morrow, even on a very slight provocation. His quick presentation of that home given him by the people, to his wife, who was bent on turning it over to the church for a priest house, cooked his batter, and now he is not even a social idol. People won't take to a man who is run by a wife who is run by a priest.

**Mt. Vernon.**

The ride down the Potomac, seventeen miles, to Mt. Vernon is a most delightful one. Aside from its historic interest, Mt. Vernon is a charming spot. The banks of the Potomac are low and the hill upon which the Washington house is located is about 100 feet above the level of the river, and so much higher than the surrounding elevations that it is given the dignity of a mountain, consequently Mt. Vernon.

The grounds or park about the house consist of twenty or thirty acres, their beauty enlarged by the native forest trees, which every person of good sense and taste will permit to stand around his house. The path from the boat leads directly up to the tomb, the picture of which is familiar to all. It is a plain vault, built into the bank, with a large open door, well protected by iron gratings. On the floor rests the two marble sarcophagi containing the bodies of Washington and his wife. On the wall is a tablet with these words inscribed:

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live again; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

It is hardly likely that Washington ordered such an inscription placed in his tomb, as it implies that there is no resurrection whatever, nor living again, for those who believe not and who compose the most of humanity. Washington had sense enough to know that men believe as they are reared, and as they are prejudiced in childhood, and as they observe and reason later, and as to climate and environment, and besides, he must have known that belief in the resurrection of the body is foolish any now.

Near to the tomb are three trees of note—one, an elm, planted by Dom Pedro, Emperor of Brazil; a British oak, planted by the Prince of Wales, now King of England, and a German linden, planted by Prince Henry of Prussia.

"It is surely a test of his fame," said I to Dr. Barnes, "when the proud princes of the earth travel here and plant trees at the great Republican's grave."

I had always been under the impression that the small out-houses I saw in the pictures of Mt. Vernon were negro servants' quarters. Instead, they are his coach house, smoke house, gardener's house, spinning house, carpenter's house, butler's house, ice house, private office, and family kitchen; into the latter of which we were first to enter. Here are everything just as they were used in Washington's time—the huge fireplace, with its swinging cranes, pots, skillets, etc., which made me almost small corn pone, was the greatest curiosity. I got on the outside of two big glasses of fresh sweet milk, which they had on sale at five cents a glass. The house is furnished throughout with the original furniture, excepting the carpets, only one of the original, being in use, a velvet presented by Louis XVI. The originals are duplicated, however, with new pieces, most of them of the rag pattern, and very pretty they look, too, one such is on the floor of the "Lafayette room," and one in what is called the "best room." The furniture and pictures and picture frames were the very finest of their day, and the whole atmosphere around and in the house breathes the aristocrat.

Washington's bed is of mahogany, of the old fashioned four tall posts variety, without an end board, and it is so short that when he stretched, his feet must have extended a half yard at least. On cold nights when he "scooped" up into the shape of the letter "Z" it was evident that there was very little room for Martha. Martha's room, and the one in which she died, is a small low room right above Washington's in the attic, reminding me of Paine's room in Philadelphia—with the same slant of ceiling, and little two by three window.

The first utterance every one gives,

the ladies especially, is "What in the world did she want to stay up here for?" A lady asked me this, and I told her I had been wondering myself, and couldn't make it out, as there were so many other fine rooms—but it was the most natural thing in the world for a woman to take to the attic after a spat, and as George was known to be fond of riding around seeing ladies, it is very probable that a spat occurred, for surely no woman would sleep in such a box, unless she was mad at her husband and jealous. It is told us that Washington was caught in a heavy rain while riding about his estate attending to plantation matters, from which exposure bronchitis and probably pneumonia developed, which caused his death.

**Washington Not An Angel.**

I don't mention this to cast any reflection. Washington wasn't an angel. He was well known to be a ladies' gentleman. We all have our faults. Every family has its troubles. I only speak of it because much reflection is cast upon the domestic life of Paine by the clergy, while they gloss over that of Washington. Paine wasn't any better than Washington, and a lot of the clergy themselves; but they paint his character black while they bleach Washington snow-white. The virtue of Washington is a common text. Had he written a book like the "Age of Reason," he would have been the arch-devil of lust. His private life would have been probed to the very bottom.

The facts are that all such matters are each individual's own private affair, and the clergy are not such pattern of virtue themselves that they should throw stones nor hide the failings of one and enlarge the failings of the other.

**Washington's Swords**

hang in a case in the main hall. On a card is written a clause in his will which reads:

"These swords are accompanied with an injunction not to unsheathe them for the purpose of shedding blood, except it be in self defense or in defense of their country and its rights; and in the latter case, to keep them unsheathed, and prefer falling with them in hand, to the relinquishing of them."

**The Key of the Bastille.**

hangs in a case on the wall, opposite to the swords. On a card above is inscribed:

**KEY OF THE BASTILLE.**

Presented to Gen. Washington by Lafayette.

I called an usher, who is there for the purpose of explaining Mt. Vernon history, and who is supposed to be so well informed that he can answer any question. I called his attention to the inscription, and told him that it was incomplete—that it should read—"Presented to General Washington by Lafayette, and delivered to him by Thomas Paine."

He informed me that everything in the building was the result of study and inquiry and is historically correct; that Lafayette himself gave the key to Washington. Just then an old lady, whom I noticed was attracted by my statement, dipped in and said in a shrill, piping voice: "I am a Daughter of the Revolution, and I was here in 1852, and I know Tom Paine didn't give that key to General Washington."

"How do you know, madam?" said I.

"Well," she replied, "I was here in 1852, and I heard then by the servants still living that Lafayette gave that key to Washington."

"My dear madam," said I, "you only know then what you heard servants tell, and they are not always good historians. Now is that all you know about it?"

"Well, I am a Daughter of the Revolution, and I was here in 1852, and I ought to know. I have been here enough to know as much as you, and I know Tom Paine didn't give that key to Washington."

By this time we had a crowd around us, the hearing of the name of Tom Paine exciting curiosity, and they all began peering to see what kind of an animal I looked like. The attendant said I had never heard it, and that I was the first man to make such a statement, and that it was hardly likely that I was right.

"Yes," chimed in the Daughter of the Revolution; "I was here in 1852 and I heard then that Lafayette, on his visit in 1824, gave that key in person to Washington. The idea of Tom Paine giving it to Washington!"

And then a half dozen ladies began demolishing me with what they had heard, and I was informed by each that she was a Daughter of the Revolution.

I told them that Washington died in 1799, twenty-five years before Lafayette visited America in 1824, and how, then, could Lafayette have presented it in person? Then I flashed one of the Los Angeles Liberal Club's memorial cards, which Walter Collins had sent me and which I had put in my pocket for reference, and read them Paine's letter, which is as follows:

London, Eng., May 1, 1790.

Gen. George Washington: Sir—Our very good friend, the Marquis de Lafayette, has entrusted to my care the Key of the Bastille; and a drawing handsomely framed, representing the demolition of that detestable prison, as a present to your excellency, of which this letter will more particularly inform. I feel myself happy in being the person through whom the Marquis has conveyed this early trophy of the Spoils of Despotism, the first ripe fruits of American principles transplanted into Europe to his great master patron. When he mentioned to me the present he intended, my heart leaped with joy.

It is something so truly in character that no remarks can illustrate it, and it is more happily expressive of his remembrance of his American friends than any letters can convey.

That the principles of America opened the Bastille is not to be doubted, and therefore the key comes to the right place. THOS. PAINE.

Several asked to look at the card, and said they didn't believe the letter was genuine, and "the Daughter"

plied, "You must be an Infidel."

"Yes," said I, "I must be. I'm just what Washington, Lafayette and Tom Paine all were—an Infidel."

"Well," she squeaked, "I don't believe it, and you can't prove it, and I don't believe what any infidel would say, anyhow; and I don't believe that card. I am a Daughter of the Revolution and I was here the first time in 1852, and that was long before you were born, and I heard then that Lafayette gave that key to Washington, and I am as likely to know as much as you about it. Tom Paine didn't give that key to Washington."

"My dear madam," said I, "I respect your age—and I am glad to know that you are a Daughter of the Revolution. Didn't I understand you to say you are a Daughter of the Revolution, and was here in 1852?"

"Yes, since the society was first organized; I am one of the charter members and was first here in 1852." "Well, I am indeed glad to have the honor of meeting one of the charter members of the Daughters of the Revolution, who was here first in 1852, but I want to say, and say it kindly, madam, if your knowing capacity were equal to your hearing capacity, you would know more than George Washington, Lafayette, Thomas Jefferson and the whole Continental Congress."

At this indication of hot air several of the ladies left, and soon all followed, some of them looking mean looks at me, and later, as I was leaving the grounds, I saw a group of them watching my departure, and the little old hatchet-faced Daughter of the Revolution who had been there in 1852 among them, and all of them evidently chewing the rag about that infidel and his lying claim, and I'll bet they'll tell it to one another, and in their councils, and to their preachers, and keep on chewing the rag about it until they all get lint on their lives.

**Washington the Hero.**

Strange as it may seem, the heroes of the pen are, in the main, but as fools of a passing day; while the heroes of the sword are the worshipped and glorified saints of the age. What an immense difference in the spaces occupied by Herbert Spencer and Lord Kitchener, Washington having been first in war is, from that sense, of hero-worship in our natures, first in the hearts of his countrymen. Not only this, but the whole world admires and worships a great and successful hero.

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